

LOCAL NEWS

South side library overdue, but well worth the time



Nellie Doneva/Reporter-News John Morales, left, and Brayden Ivy, right, work on creating inside walls for several new rooms that will be part of the South branch of the Abilene Public Library inside the Mall of Abilene.

By Scott Kirk

Posted: Yesterday 6:32 p.m.

There are two things of which City Librarian Lori Grumet is fairly certain when it comes to the Abilene Public Library's south branch at the Mall of Abilene.

One is that it won't be finished this summer. The other is that it will be worth the wait. "We had an extremely ambitious timetable when we started," said Grumet Tuesday afternoon as she conducted a tour of the transformation of the 20,000-square foot location that was originally an Old Navy store. "That was the enthusiasm talking. Now,

we just want to do it right.”

The goal now is to be open by the end of September, which may also be an optimistic deadline. “That’s going to be pretty tight, too,” said Grumet.

“That’s just 12 weeks from now.” Whenever the project is completed, Grumet is confident the public will appreciate the new branch. The current south branch on South 14th Street is just over 5, square feet. It could almost fit in the corner of the new location that will house children’s literature.

However, Grumet isn’t worried about having too much room. “I’ve been in the military all my life and one principle I believe in is however much space you have, you’ll fill it up,” she said.

The new branch will not only have a large children’s area but also an area for teens, a demographic that Grumet admitted has been hard for her to reach. The area will have two large monitors that can be used for gaming and other video and the accouterments of the area will be unlike what is found in most libraries.

“We wanted to give this space its unique and hip vibe,” she said. Another addition to the branch will be three glass-enclosed study rooms that will have whiteboards and equipment that will allow people to record themselves.

“That’s going to be pretty cool,” said Grumet. Another feature of the library will be something that librarians of an earlier generation may have thought unnecessary to install — a quiet room where people who are looking for the old-school library experience can go to read and not be disturbed.

As Grumet noted, a library with an area devoted to children and another to teens is not going to be quiet.

However, she said the area for teens is one that Mall of Abilene

management appreciates. “They like the fact that there will be a place designed for teens to hang out,” Grumet said.

Contractors are building two restroom areas, both with changing tables, as well as installing a new fire sprinkler system and updating the HVAC system.

The branch will have an outside entrance on the south side of the mall as well as a main entrance in the mall near J.C. Penney. The north wall of the branch, that faces inside the mall, will be glass.

The location has been the site of two large retailers and an exercise studio over the past 20 years.

“Nothing’s seemed to click here,” said Grumet. “This will click. It’s going to be really nice. We want the public to enjoy this space.”

Find this article at:

<http://www.reporternews.com/news/local/south-side-library-overdue-but-well-worth-the-time-36581fc6-1455-2a10-e053-0100007f51ea-384887001.html>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.